

Appendix A - Partnerships

BACKGROUND AND VALUE

This appendix examines the meaning and importance of partnerships with respect to solid waste management. It provides information on how partnerships are already making a difference in Kansas. It also provides general information on the who, what and how of partnerships including key strategies; how they succeed and fail; how to develop consensus; and team building exercises.

Partnerships involve associations, collaboration, cooperation and working with others toward a common goal. Depending upon your point of view or the nature of the association, your “partner” can be considered an accomplice, cohort, collaborator, compeer or cooperator. In other circumstances the collaboration is among equals, a match, a mate or peer. Often it is the joining together of various interests and people for community or environmental interests.

The end product of many partnerships includes an accord, agreement, alliance, pact, settlement, treaty, or understanding.

In the business world partnerships become a legal transaction where members of a business venture created by contract between two or more persons who agree to pool talent and money and share profits.

The synonyms (words that are similar and relate to the word partnership) include: alignment, alinement, alliance, association, axis, block, coalition, confederacy, confederation, and federation.

The word partnership, is well used and a popular word in today’s culture. A quick survey of a popular search engine web site¹ generated 3,735,199 items under “partnerships” organized into custom search folders: current news; special

collection documents; bankruptcy law; family limited partnership; careers & occupations; wedding products & services; book publishing; community policing; local area networks; year 2000 computer problem; economic development; optical networking and all others.¹ In reviewing these categories, partnerships are found everywhere in our personal, business, private and public lives. Churches working with other groups, special interest groups forming numerous alliances to work with and against various government and private sector initiatives. The largest private sector mention of partnerships was with internet and “e” commerce. This is surprising since the internet was a collaboration of the U.S. government (civil and military), academic and private sector worlds. It was bred in partnerships and now its commercial progeny reflect its roots. The success or failure of this medium has also been rooted in the partnerships made.

WHY PARTNER?

Partnerships can be a key to effective solid waste management. They bring different people and organizations together to address common interests and concerns. They provide:

- more efficient use of natural, financial and human resources;
- a spirit of sharing and cooperation;
- fairness which minimizes the potential for negative social and economic impacts; and,
- more creative and acceptable ways to protect natural resources.

“Partnerships can also be challenging. It takes time and skill to create successful partnerships. Maintaining motivation and enthusiasm is another



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challenge, especially if positive results don't happen quickly. All the relevant stakeholders must believe their efforts are needed."

Building partnerships will also create other challenges. "Remember, the benefits of partnerships usually far outweigh the challenges."

"Success depends on involving a good mix of people and organizations." ²

WHO ARE POSSIBLE PARTNERS?

Partners can be almost any person or organization.

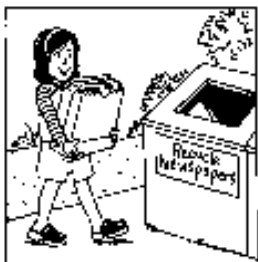
Partners include the *mass media* from television, radio, newspaper, cable and the internet; *financial institutions* including the banks, savings and loans, credit unions, stock brokers and insurance companies; *business and industry* from the largest companies to the smallest, from downtown to malls; *farm organizations* from the local coop to local farm bureaus and unions; *environmental & conservation groups* from the local stream team, Audubon Society, Quail and Ducks Unlimited, Wildlife Society; local archery or gun club, Sierra Club, Wildflower Society, local hiking, boating, fishing, wildflower and gardening clubs; *local elected officials* from the County Clerk or Commissioner to the municipal officers, sheriff and local magistrate; *state and federal elected officials* from state and Congressional representatives and senators, Secretary of State, Insurance Commissioner, Governor; *Local Government Agencies* including local planning agencies, economic development offices, county clerk's office and health agencies; *State and Federal Government Agencies* including the Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing, Kansas Department of Health and Environment,

Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Department of Agriculture; *Chambers of Commerce*; *Students* through their schools and local organizations including the boy and girl scouts, 4-H, Future Farmers of America; *Teachers*; *women's groups*; *religious leaders*; *retired persons*; *Civic organizations* including Rotary, Kiwanis, Optimists, *regional groups* like Resource Conservation Districts (RC&D's) and economic development agencies; *College, University, Technical Schools and Junior College* programs like Kansas State University's Research and Extension, Kansas University's Small Business Environmental Assistance Program; Fort Hays State's Docking Institute; Pittsburg State University's The Kansas Polymer Research Center which provides research and technical assistance in polymers and plastics; and last, but not least, *individual volunteers*.



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SOME KANSAS EXAMPLES OF PARTNERSHIPS THAT ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Back in the late 1980's and early 1990's, a recycling volunteer got really active to the point that not only a city but the county began a recycling program. Soon a regional group hired her to help work with its members' counties. A regional program was created by KDHE and federal grants, contributions from each county, various communities and volunteers. As the programs grew and matured, the county programs became more individualized but the region still worked together where it was possible. The U.S. Department of Energy and the Kansas Corporation Commission was impressed enough with the program and its organizers they funded a book on setting up recycling programs.³

A county seat started a PRIDE program (which is sponsored by the Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing and Kansas State University). The community got a recycling program going and then eventually expanded to include the other communities in the county. Both the city and county jointly support the program with monthly funding. The city provides the manpower for loading the recyclables and the county pays for a local milling company to provide the forklift. With KDHE grant funds, a newer, larger facility is being built.

Many counties across Kansas are beginning to recognize the benefits of recycling and source reduction. So rather than shipping their wastes long



distances or filling up their landfills too quickly, some have started to pay recycling programs in lieu of paying landfill tonnage fees. This provides the funding base for many programs and provides a direct market incentive to reduce, reuse and recycle.

There are some municipalities and counties that actively work together while others carve out their respective roles in solid waste management. Others ignore or actively compete with each other. Sometimes their respective citizens lose out. A good example of where a city and county benefitted from working together involves a local recycling and composting program. City staff and local volunteers have been operating a recycling facility since 1993. Wood chipping equipment is shared by the county and local school district. Recently the county received KDHE funding for recycling trailers to be placed around the county to capture more recyclables to be sent to the city operations.



Around Kansas you will find recycling trailers at junior and senior high school parking lots where the schools recycle and work with the community. Some trailers even have the school colors painted on them to encourage more interest and local pride. Communities and counties share in the pick up and delivery of recyclable materials to get them to market.

In one community, there is a local automotive garage that has been converted into the recycling station for the community. Materials are collected at the local schools with recycling receptacles and home made wire mesh containers.

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In another corner of the state, another county seat joined with a non-profit recycling group, a private recycling company and the county to develop a broad-based recycling program that is growing. As with many rural counties in Kansas everyone gets involved including the many volunteers from Kiwanis, Rotary, other civic groups, elementary classes, high school ecology clubs, church youth groups, 4-H groups and caring individuals. As the program grows and gains stability, it can start working with other counties in the region to combine materials destined for recycling markets to get better prices.

Many rural recycling programs are totally volunteer (children, teens and adults). One program has the Girl and Boy Scouts loading newspapers onto an old school bus owned by a local citizen. The local economic development office, county commission, and city collaborate to make this project happen and all proceeds go to the local girl and boy scout troops. When there are huge loads of materials that need to be handled, the local implement dealer loans out a loader to get things done.

Other counties have formal solid waste utilities or operating authorities that handle all solid waste issues thereby creating a government-sponsored partnership that is self supporting and funded. These programs often have stronger goals and local requirements to ensure success.

Another program faced with hauling its trash several hundred miles developed a community wide partnership. Extensive community outreach created a diversion rate higher than 50 percent.



In several large urban areas, groups of volunteers have carried the recycling torch for decades where local government, for various reasons, has not been an active participant. To establish litter collection, programs, monitor drop off boxes, or organize meetings and rallies; these individuals have formed partnerships as they could.

A network of thirty-six household hazardous waste facilities developed during the 1990's has created cost effective community-based programs that have become a model for other states to emulate. This was primarily a partnership of local and state governments working within each community to make a difference.

Small groups of volunteers driven by visionary and caring individuals continue several programs at both ends of the state. Opportunities for even greater partnerships await recognition and support from others. Similar programs have been joined by many others as they grow and expand their services.

In a small tourist-based community, strong community leadership combined with great individual efforts created an internationally recognized tree growing-out station and composting center. This community also partnered with KDHE and others to host the statewide composting and later recycling and composting conference for six years.

Several programs are run by organizations that provide disadvantaged or disabled people with jobs. Unfortunately, one of these programs burned to the ground in 1999. Like a phoenix, it has rebuilt and is now an even bigger and better program, thanks to the involvement of communities, individuals, businesses, local and state government.

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Then there are the stories of the farmer or retired couple that drive around several western Kansas county communities collecting recyclables and taking them to market because it is the right thing to do and to help the neighbors and children.



A strong and successful city program that serves the city and county is expanding regionally. They spend some of the recycling proceeds to buy recycled products to remind everyone that nothing is recycled until a product is purchased which is made of recycled materials. By closing the recycling loop, the city park has been outfitted with equipment made of recycled plastic lumber. Another city has utilized waste tires to provide better accessibility for the disabled to visit parks with rubberized trails. Schools and parks across the state have investigated and used waste tires to make safer playgrounds and running tracks.



Another story is about a family-owned grocery chain that was committed to communities and recycling from the 1970's and 1980's. It joined with other grocers and bottlers to form a nonprofit organization to support statewide and local community efforts to recycle. They started some of the first aluminum can drives and community recycling efforts. In early 1990's, a major discount retail chain started supplying large drop off recycle bins in their parking lots to further

local programs. This is a superb example of businesses joining in the partnership to make a difference.

Many of these small volunteer and business-sponsored programs have grown and changed. The initial efforts are often forgotten but their legacies live on. In 1983, there were 43 recycling centers and programs in Kansas and in 2000 there were more than 1,300.

Most of these stories of successful Kansas partnerships began with an idea and a person or two that felt compelled to do something. With creativity, determination, perseverance, ingenuity, and financial and technical assistance from others these programs have flourished, all because individuals created partnerships that made a difference.



HOW TO BUILD A SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP?

Building a successful partnership takes skill, time and patience. Here are some specific strategies worth considering.

KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS

- L Establish a sense of need and direction.*
- L Select partners based on existing and potential skills (communications, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills), not personalities.*
- L Pay particular attention to the early meetings and activities.*
- L Set some ground rules related to meeting participation, discussion, confidentiality, constructive feedback, and expected contributions.*

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- L *Start with a few short-term tasks that have a good chance for success.* Be sure that early projects are realistic and will be seen as "winners" in the eyes of the partners.
- L *Establish attainable goals, both short and long term, with general strategies.* Partners should assume specific responsibilities to assure accomplishments are made within a definite time frame. Partnerships often get stuck at this stage because past experience dictates what a group believes it can or cannot do. **Do not let the past dictate the future.**
- L *Spend time together.* It will take time to get the partnership working effectively. Spend time (outside of meetings if possible) to get to know each other.
- L *Use the power of positive feedback, recognition, and reward.* People respond to positive incentives in the partnership setting just as they do as individuals.
- L *Identify and involve the "right" people.* All people with a stake (stakeholders) should feel welcome to become a partner. Make a list and consider the following three distinct groups: those who are BOTH affected by and interested; those who ARE affected, but NOT interested and those who are NOT affected, but ARE interested.
- L *Remember, leadership comes from within.* Leadership should emerge from among the members of the partnership. Someone will have to take the initial responsibility for getting members together. Once members are together, however, a consensus will be necessary regarding leadership.
- L Leadership or coordination involves the *ability to get people to voluntarily commit to goals and accept responsibilities. A top-down approach generally will not work.*
- L *Build a common purpose.* Partners should



- develop a concise purpose statement that defines general goals and responsibilities.
- L *Make best use of talents.* Build the partnership around members' interests and strengths. Each member needs to contribute their unique talents.
 - L *Individuals can provide new ideas and approaches.* Yet, the group shares responsibility for decisions and actions, as well as for successes. All members should be able to express their opinions and offer constructive criticism.
 - L *Encourage communication and participation.* Successful partnerships are built on:
 - * clear and open communication
 - * open and honest discussion during and outside meetings
 - * ability to listen to each other and provide constructive feedback
 - L *Balanced participation will also promote a spirit of trust and cooperation.* Because each partner has an interest in the success of the partnership, each should participate in discussions and decision making. **Most effective decisions are made by consensus.** This doesn't mean that everyone will be completely happy; but that everyone can live with the decision and feel decisions are fair.
 - L *Set up a flexible organization.* There is no single partnership structure that will work in every situation. Instead, your group should determine how formal the partnership needs to be. Partners could meet on a regular basis or only be contacted as needed.
 - L *Some division of labor and delegation of responsibility should be set up to take advantage of resources and expertise.* Build on existing community organizations, formal organizations and other community organizations.

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WHY PARTNERSHIPS SUCCEED

Partnerships are successful for a number of reasons. The challenge is to determine what motivates people and make sure these motivations are met.

Some individuals may contribute because their jobs involve such cooperation. Many people also enjoy working with others and meeting new challenges. They also may see the potential for professional and personal growth, as well as a sense of accomplishment.

External factors can also motivate partnerships, including public expectations and organizational mandates for cooperation.

Informal, social interaction can provide the glue that holds a partnership together. Encourage these types of interaction and build on the motivations.

WHY PARTNERSHIPS FAIL

Most people agree with the notion of partnership, at least in principle. However, partnerships may be unsuccessful for a variety of reasons:

- ; Past failures
- ; Lack of commitment
- ; Worry about lost independence
- ; Lack of credit for own contributions
- ; Personality conflicts
- ; Power struggles or turf battles
- ; Partners that do not agree on realistic roles and responsibilities
- ; Differences in cultural and personal values

HOW DO YOU BUILD A CONSENSUS?

Identify obstacles

It's important to recognize and overcome obstacles to establishing and maintaining a successful partnership. These include:

- *Lack of time or other resources* - Many partners will also have other commitments. They may not view this as an important use of their time or other resources.
- *Low levels of commitment or interest* - This can happen if the effort gets bogged down or partners aren't kept active.
- *Individualism and the "American way"* - To many, the idea of working together is contrary to beliefs in self-sufficiency and competition. Some people tend to feel it is a sign of strength to be able to solve problems on their own.
- *Loss of autonomy or recognition* - People (especially those who represent organizations) worry that a partnership means a loss of freedom or control over their own priorities and activities. Some also worry they may not get enough credit for the work they do with a partnership.
- *Conflicting goals or missions* - Because partnerships generally involve diverse members, including businesses, government agencies and advocacy groups, the organizations often have different goals and expectations. In fact, some see partnerships mainly as a way to pursue their own agenda.
- *Blaming others or feeling blamed* - It is a natural tendency to blame others for problems. Partners may blame each other for lack of progress. This may lead to the perception that they are being unfairly criticized.

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- *Overbearing or dominating partners* - Some partners (often those with considerable authority or expertise) have too much influence over a partnership. Such "experts" often discourage discussion or criticize others' ideas.
- *Reluctant partners* - Most groups have one or more members who never speak. Problems arise unless these partners are encouraged to be active in some way.
- *Feuds and competition between partners* - Partners who have long-standing feuds may attempt to continue the feud in the partnership. These tend to be based on past problems.
- *Unquestioned acceptance of opinions as facts* - Some people try to present their own personal opinions or values as facts (without supporting evidence). Rush for accomplishments - Some partners may push to "do something" either because they are impatient or are pressured from elsewhere. These partners often reach their own conclusions before the rest of the group has time to carefully consider all options. Attribution and criticism - People often assign (or attribute) negative motives to others when they disagree or don't understand the other's position. This delays seeking real explanations for problems.
- *Digression and tangents* - People tend to drift off the subject. Some digression may be useful if it promotes new ideas, but often it wastes time. Unfocused discussions can result from poor leadership.
- *Floundering* - Partnerships may have trouble starting and finishing projects. They get stuck in a rut. Some partners may resist moving forward.
- *Lack of Flexibility* - Some partners may have just one way of doing things and seem unable to adapt to change.

HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE?

- L Do nothing. Ignore the problem if it is only an occasional issue.
- L Talk informally with disruptive partner(s) outside the group setting. Give constructive feedback.
- L Discuss general concerns at the beginning of a meeting without pointing out particular partners.
- L For particularly disruptive behavior, it may be necessary to confront the partner(s) outside of the group in a more assertive manner.
- L As a last resort (once other approaches have failed) the leader may need to confront the person in the presence of the group. Use constructive feedback, but in an objective and assertive manner.

Overcome Obstacles

Regardless of how cooperative the people in your partnership are, some problems will ultimately arise. There are several ways to overcome obstacles:

Anticipate and prevent obstacles whenever possible. This often works best by spending time up front getting to know each other, establishing ground rules, and agreeing to individual roles and responsibilities.

Think of each problem as a group challenge (rather than as an individual problem). We have a natural tendency to blame individuals for problems. The truth is that many problems occur because the group lets them happen.

Be careful with difficult people. When problems occur with a particular person, take care not to over-react. Some behaviors are only a minor disruption. On the other hand, certain behaviors are very disruptive and slow progress.

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Building a Consensus

One of the best ways to overcome obstacles is to build a consensus. Effective consensus decisions share the following characteristics:

Total participation

All major interests are identified and brought together.

All partners are responsible

Everyone helps plan activities and offers suggestions to make them more effective.

Partners educate each other

They spend time discussing the history of the issue, their perceptions and concerns, and ideas for solutions.

People are kept informed

Partners keep their own groups informed and the rest of the people who live in the community, county or region.

A common definition of the problem is used:

- (Partners discuss and agree on a constructive definition of the problem. Multiple options are identified.
- (Partners seek a range of options to satisfy their respective concerns and avoid pushing single positions. Decisions are made by mutual agreement.
- (Partners don't vote, but they modify options or seek alternatives until everyone agrees that the best decision has been reached.
- (Partners are responsible for implementation. The group identifies ways to implement solutions.

Ways to Maintain a Consensus:

- T Actively involve a broad range of stakeholders and citizens as partners in planning and implementing the specific project.
- T Ensure each partner has the opportunity and responsibility for meaningful contributions.
- T Document, publicize and celebrate the successes through an ongoing recognition program and communication campaign.
- T Designate an effective and respected project leader who can maintain the activities of the partnership.
- T Identify and manage conflicts early in the process.
- T Make sure activities are exciting and fun to maintain interest and commitment.

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1. NorthernLights.com, July, 2000.
2. A majority of this chapter involving the who, what and how of partnerships came from one source document and unless otherwise noted, all quotes in this chapter come from: *Building Local Partnerships: A Guide for Watershed Partnerships* found at <http://ctic.purdue.edu/kyw/brochures/buildinglocal.html>

The Know Your Watershed campaign is coordinated by the Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC), a nonprofit public/private partnership dedicated to the advancement of environmentally beneficial and economically viable natural resource systems. It provides information and data about agricultural and natural resource management systems, practices and technologies. The center was established in 1982 under the charter of the Association of Conservation Districts.

3. Grassroots Organizational Guide to Recycling, by Joan Vibert, Lake Region Recycling Coordinator, September 1992, US Department of Energy, Kansas City Support Office.
 4. Graphics provided by the American Forest and Paper Association on the internet at: <http://www.afandpa.org/Recycling/clipart.html>
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